

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Newsletter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 KJV)

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Flim-Flammed

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When you have been “flimflammed” you have been tricked, conned, scammed, or deceived. The world is full of con artists and deceivers. We hear stories on the news regularly of various types of scams. We were even warned by the news shows to be careful giving money for the tsunami relief efforts because of a number of false relief groups that were conning people.

We might expect this from the world, the heathen, and the unbelievers but certainly not from those that profess to follow Jesus. Right? Wrong! Peter warns of “flimflammers”,

2 Peter 2:1-3 NASB But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. (2) Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; (3) and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

Notice that these scammers come from among the people, those who profess to belong to Christ, those who are part of the church. Many will follow them because of their lifestyle (sensuality) and they will scam (exploit) us because of their greed. “Exploit” in the original means “to take advantage”, “to trade or make merchandise” of us. That is what flimflammers do—they make merchandise of us to feed their greed. Timothy elaborates a little more on their character.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 NASB But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. (2) For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, (4) treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5) holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

The primary characteristics are listed first—lovers of self and lovers of money. In other words their lifestyle is completely self-centered and money oriented to provide them with the comfort and pleasure that they so love. And when they teach, Titus tells us it is for the sake of money.

Titus 1:10-11 NASB For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, (11) who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain.

So, putting all of this together, we have the warning that in the last days there will arise from our own ranks false teachers and prophets who will flimflam us out of our money to sustain their own self-centered, pleasurable lifestyle. We must silence them because they are upsetting whole families with their teaching.

Does this sound like it is happening today? Just take a look at the mail you receive from various ministries or tune in to Trinity Broadcasting Network. Lavish lifestyles created from constant appeals for money. How has this happened to us?

This has happened in part because of the American Church's emphasis on prosperity. When a particular message is emphasized to the exclusion of other balancing messages, we have an unhealthy focus and possibly the beginnings of a heresy. Many of these ministries appeal to the greed in us. We have turned the financial blessing of the Lord into an investment strategy--"Give your seed money and God will return it a hundredfold." We have brought into the church the world's investment methodology and have tried to make it palatable by declaring that God guarantees monetary return. The emphasis seems to be that you "give to get" and appeals directly to our desire to be rich. Timothy condemns this by addressing the source.

1 Timothy 6:9-10 NASB But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. (10) For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

The secret to planting seed for any harvest is in the soil. For God to multiply our financial seed sown and give us a bountiful harvest, it must be planted in good soil. Most of those that I see making the strongest appeals for money and claiming the greatest blessings are actually very poor soil. They are really flimflammers bilking the people of God and hindering the truly good soil from receiving adequate seed for a harvest.

Something similar happened to the Hebrews after the wall and temple were rebuilt in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 13:4-12 NASB Now prior to this, Eliashib the priest, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, being related to Tobiah, (5) had prepared a large room for him, where formerly they put the grain offerings, the frankincense, the utensils and the tithes of grain, wine and oil prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. (6) But during all this *time* I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had gone to the king. After some time, however, I asked leave from the king, (7) and I came to Jerusalem and learned about the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, by preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. (8) It was very displeasing to me, so I threw all of Tobiah's household goods out of the

room. (9) Then I gave an order and they cleansed the rooms; and I returned there the utensils of the house of God with the grain offerings and the frankincense. (10) I also discovered that the portions of the Levites had not been given them, so that the Levites and the singers who performed the service had gone away, each to his own field. (11) So I reprimanded the officials and said, "Why is the house of God forsaken?" Then I gathered them together and restored them to their posts. (12) All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine and oil into the storehouses.

Tobiah was an Ammonite and was kin to Eliashib though marriage (this in itself was a violation of God's commands). Eliashib set Tobiah up in the chambers of the house of God that normally contained the tithes and offerings—the storehouse. With no storehouse, those that depended on their provision from the storehouse were left without enough. They had to leave their service to the Lord and go plow their fields in order to eat. Nehemiah threw Tobiah out and restored the Levites to their posts and the tithe came again to the storehouse.

This is what has happened today. The greed of the world system has found lodging in the house of the Lord, actually taken in and setup by those who have a kinship with it. This has corrupted the storehouse. The money from the tithes and offerings have been taken captive by the so called “seed faith” ministries and used on their own self-centered pleasures and lavish lifestyles. As a consequence, those who should be receiving from the storehouse have had to leave off their service to the Lord to plow their own field or to “make tents” to support themselves.

It is time to rise up in the spirit of Nehemiah and throw out the modern day “Tobiah” who have confiscated the storehouse of the Lord by “flimflamming” His people. Return the tithes and offerings to the “good soil” of those who have the heart of the Father and desire to see Him accomplish His will in the earth. It is time for us as His body to rise up with righteous anger and throw “the money-changers” out of the temple. The day is coming when the wrath of the Lord will be revealed against those who make merchandise of His people.

We can say to these the same words that Paul spoke to Elymas the magician just before the Lord struck him blind.

Acts 13:10 NASB and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?

We rise up in the spirit of Elijah and declare as a voice crying in the wilderness:

Luke 3:4-5 NASB as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. (5) 'EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;

It is time to make ready the way of the Lord. He is coming in power and we will give an account to Him.

Even so, Lord Jesus come!

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